

Bobcat Hunter/Trapper Survey 2002

By Jessica Kitchell and John Olson

Abstract

Hunting/trapping questionnaires were mailed to all bobcat hunter/trappers that received permits at the end of the 2002 season (October 19 to December 31). The response rate was 75%. Sixty-eight percent of the hunter/trappers returning surveys pursued bobcats in 2002. Of these, 26% reported registering a bobcat. Three-fourths (77%) of the respondents indicated that the bobcat population in 2002 was about the same or more abundant than it had been in 2001.

Methods

After the completion of the 2002 season, a questionnaire was mailed to each of the 1,330 hunter/trappers who received a permit to pursue bobcats. A follow-up second mailing was then made to nonrespondents. Bobcat harvest permit holders were asked specific questions about their hunting and trapping methods used during the season (Fig. 1). Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNRUNIX production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool.

Results

Of the 1,330 bobcat hunter/trappers queried, 993 responded, for a response rate of 75%. Sixty-eight percent of these respondents reported hunting and/or trapping bobcats during the 2002 season (Table 1, Question 1). The most common reason given for not pursuing bobcats was "poor weather" (Table 1, Question 2). Due to a lack of snow during the 2002 season, hunting pressure was very low.

Nearly twenty-six percent of hunter/trappers who pursued bobcats were successful (Table 1, Question 3). Trappers spent on average 16.9 days afield with 6.2 sets/day and located on average 3.4 bobcats (Table 1, Question 4). Thirty-four (33.9) percent of these trappers were successful. Only 3.5% of trappers released bobcats from their traps during the 2002 season, and some trappers reported releasing up to 3 bobcats (Table 1, Question 5). Hunters who used dogs spent on average 5.3 days afield. Twenty-four (23.5) percent of these hunters were successful. By comparison, hunters who hunted without dogs spent on average 5.8 days afield, with a six percent success rate (Table 1, Question 6). Nearly eleven (10.6%) percent of hunters using trained dogs reported to have passed on treed bobcats (Table 1, Question 7). Hunting/trapping efforts were heaviest in Price, Ashland, and Sawyer counties (Table 1, Question 8), but 22 counties within the state were utilized.

Most hunter/trappers (76.8%) indicated that the bobcat population was about the same or more abundant than the previous year. Since bobcat hunter/trappers spend many hours driving around and looking for sign, they were also asked to give their impressions of fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf populations. Most hunter/trappers indicated that the fisher (75.4%), coyote (80.3%), and gray wolf (77.4%) populations were about the same or more abundant than the previous year. However, most hunter/trappers (70.4%) felt that the fox populations were about the same or less abundant than the previous year (Table 1, Question 9).

The most common habitat (35.4%) where bobcats were hunted or trapped was lowland forest-swamp/regeneration brush. The next most frequently hunted/trapped habitat was lowland forest-swamp/large mature (17.2%). The least common habitat (3.0%) was upland hardwood forest-thinned pole-sized trees (Table 1, Question 10).

Bobcat harvest permit holders were asked to report possible tracks and/or visual observations of the following rare mammals: Canada lynx, gray wolf, marten, or cougar; while pursuing bobcats. Gray wolf was most frequently reported, followed by pine marten, cougar, and Canada lynx (Table 1, Question 11). The counties in which these observations occurred can be found in Table 1, Question 11a. However, it must be emphasized that none of these observations were verified by wildlife professionals.

Table 1. *Responses to the 2002 bobcat hunter/trapper survey.*

1. Did you hunt and/or trap bobcat during the 2002 season? (Percent)

Yes	68.3
No	31.7
No answer = 0	

2. If no, why didn't you hunt and/or trap for bobcat? (Percent)

Poor Weather	59.4
Too far to travel	4.6
Other	36.0
No answer = 620	

The most frequently stated reasons listed under 'other' were, injury/illness, no snow, and time constraints.

3. Did you register a bobcat during the 2002 season (Oct 19 through Dec 31)? (Percent)

Yes	25.8
No	74.2
No answer = 16	

4. If you TRAPPED bobcat during the 2002 season, please answer the following questions:
(Expressed as mean)

Number of days trapped	16.9
Average number of sets/day	6.2
Number of bobcats located	3.4

5. Did you release any bobcats from your traps during the season? (Percent)

Yes	3.5
No	96.5

If yes, how many? (Frequency)

1	8
2	7
3	2

6. If you HUNTED bobcat during the 2002 season, please answer the following questions:
(Expressed as mean).

Number of days hunted with dogs	5.3
Number of days hunted without dogs	5.8
Number of bobcats run with dogs	4.7
Number of bobcats located	7.4

7. Did you pass on any treed bobcats during the season?

Yes	10.5
No	89.3

If yes, how many (Frequency)?

1	20
2	19
3	9
4	2
5	2
10	1
15	1
16	2

8. In which counties did you hunt and/or trap bobcats? (Please list the county you spent the most time in first) (frequency, percent).

County	# of Trips	Percent	County	# of Trips	Percent
Ashland	88	8.9	Lincoln	46	4.7
Barron	1	0.1	Marinette	57	5.8
Bayfield	47	4.8	Oconto	22	2.3
Burnett	12	1.2	Oneida	72	7.3
Chippewa	12	1.2	Polk	3	0.3
Columbia	1	0.1	Price	125	12.7
Douglas	56	5.7	Rusk	43	4.4
Florence	16	1.6	Sawyer	75	7.6
Forest	71	7.2	Taylor	54	5.5
Iron	65	6.6	Vilas	29	3.0
Langlade	48	4.9	Washburn	39	4.0

9. In your opinion, how does the current bobcat, fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf population compare to last year? Check one for each species. (Percent)

	Bobcat	Fox	Coyote	Fisher	Gray Wolf
More abundant than last	36.6	19.2	48.5	43.0	72.2
Less abundant than last year	7.0	32.7	13.7	11.9	1.1
About the same as last year	40.2	37.8	31.8	32.5	5.4
No opinion	16.2	10.4	6.0	12.7	21.3

10. In which habitat type did you hunt and/or trap for bobcat the most? (Percent)

Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Regeneration Brush	12.3
Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Thinned / Pole-sized	4.6
Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Large / Mature	5.4
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Regeneration Brush	35.3
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Thinned / Pole-sized	11.3
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Large / Mature	17.3
Upland Hardwoods – Regeneration Brush	6.8
Upland Hardwoods – Thinned / Pole-sized	2.9
Upland Hardwoods – Large / Mature	4.1

11. Did you see any of the following mammals or their tracks during the past year? (Percent)

	Canada Lynx	Timber Wolf	Pine Marten	Cougar
Yes	0.5	77.3	12.6	4.0
No	99.5	22.7	87.4	96.1

Note: All observations of these rare species have **not** been verified by wildlife professionals. Any interpretations based on this data should be done very cautiously.

- 11a. If yes, in which counties were they sighted? (Frequency)

County	Canada Lynx		Gray Wolf		Pine Marten		Cougar	
	Tracks	Sighting	Tracks	Sighting	Tracks	Sighting	Tracks	Sighting
Adams	4		1					
Ashland	2		70	29	12	7		
Barron			1			1		
Bayfield			43	20	3	4	1	
Burnett			10	2				
Chippewa			7	1				
Clark			4	3				
Columbia			1					
Douglas			54	25	3	2		
Dunn				1				
Florence			9	5	1	1		1
Forest			40	11	11	3	4	3

County	Canada Lynx		Gray Wolf		Pine Marten		Cougar	
	Tracks	Sighting	Tracks	Sighting	Tracks	Sighting	Tracks	Sighting
Iron			61	19	10	1	1	
Jackson			4					
Juneau			7					
La Crosse								1
Langlade		1	27	10	2	1	1	
Lincoln			31	18	2	1	2	2
Manitowoc			1	1				
Marathon			3					
Marinette			18	6	2	1	3	1
Menominee				1				
Monroe			1					
Oconto			10	5				
Oneida			53	25	4	6		
Outagamie			1					
Ozaukee				1				
Polk			4	1				
Portage				1			1	1
Price			93	48	4	4	5	2
Rusk			25	11	3	2	2	
Sauk				1				
Sawyer			61	22	5	1	1	
Shawano			2	1				
Taylor			45	9		1		1
Trempealeau			1					
Vilas			24	10	1	2		
Washburn			33	16	2			
Washington				1				
Winnebago				1				
Wood			4			1		

Note: All observations of these rare species have **not** been verified by wildlife professionals. Any interpretations based on this data should be done very cautiously.

Wisconsin Bobcat Hunting / Trapping Questionnaire

s. 23.09(2)(k), Wis. Stats.

Form 2300-232 (R 12/02)

Dear Bobcat Hunter/Trapper:

You have been selected to help the Department of Natural Resources gather much needed information on Wisconsin's bobcat harvest. Please help our furbearer management program by completing this voluntary questionnaire. When you have completed the questionnaire, reverse the flap, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management, even though no postage is required to return the questionnaire. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson
Furbearer Ecologist
Bureau of Wildlife Management

1. Did you hunt and/or trap bobcat during the 2002 season? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/>		2. If no, why didn't you hunt and/or trap for bobcat? Poor weather (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Please explain: _____ Too far to travel (2) <input type="checkbox"/> _____			
IF YOU DID NOT HUNT OR TRAP, STOP HERE AND RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU!					
3. Did you register a bobcat during the 2002 season (October 19 through December 31)? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/>		4. If you TRAPPED bobcat during the 2002 season, please answer the following questions: Number of days trapped _____ Average number of sets/day _____ Number of bobcats located _____			
5. Did you release any bobcats from your traps during the season? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, how many? _____		6. If you HUNTED bobcat during the 2002 season, please answer the following questions: Number of days hunted with dogs _____ Number of days hunted without dogs _____ Number of bobcats run with dogs _____ Number of bobcats located _____			
7. Did you pass on any treed bobcats during the season? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, how many? _____		8. In which counties did you hunt and/or trap bobcats? (Please list the county you spent the most time in first.) _____ _____			
9. In your opinion, how does the current bobcat, fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf population compare to last year? (Check one for each species)					
	<u>Bobcat</u>	<u>Fox</u>	<u>Coyote</u>	<u>Fisher</u>	<u>Gray Wolf</u>
More abundant than last year	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>	(9) <input type="checkbox"/>	(13) <input type="checkbox"/>	(13) <input type="checkbox"/>
Less abundant than last year	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(6) <input type="checkbox"/>	(10) <input type="checkbox"/>	(14) <input type="checkbox"/>	(14) <input type="checkbox"/>
About the same as last year	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(7) <input type="checkbox"/>	(11) <input type="checkbox"/>	(15) <input type="checkbox"/>	(15) <input type="checkbox"/>
No opinion	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(8) <input type="checkbox"/>	(12) <input type="checkbox"/>	(16) <input type="checkbox"/>	(16) <input type="checkbox"/>
10. In which habitat type did you hunt and/or trap for bobcat the most? (Check one)		11. Did you see any of the following mammals or their tracks during the past year?			
<u>Upland Pine / Spruce / Balsam</u> Regeneration / Brush (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinned / Pole-sized (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Large / Mature (3) <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Lowland Forest / Swamp</u> Regeneration / Brush (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinned / Pole-sized (5) <input type="checkbox"/> Large / Mature (6) <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Upland Hardwoods</u> Regeneration / Brush (7) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinned / Pole-sized (8) <input type="checkbox"/> Large / Mature (9) <input type="checkbox"/>		<u>Canada Lynx</u> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Visual observations _____ in counties _____ Track observations _____ in counties _____ <u>Gray Wolf</u> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Visual observations _____ in counties _____ Track observations _____ in counties _____ <u>Pine Marten</u> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Visual observations _____ in counties _____ Track observations _____ in counties _____ <u>Cougar</u> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Visual observations _____ in counties _____ Track observations _____ in counties _____ Please try and contact your local wildlife biologist or the state mammal ecologist (715-762-4684, ext. 107) promptly to allow for possible verification.			

Please add any comments you would like to offer regarding bobcat populations, harvest regulations or overall bobcat management.

Figure 1. The 2002 Wisconsin bobcat hunting/trapping questionnaire.